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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 003339

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/AND, WHA/PDA

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SUBJECT: EU AHEAD OF THE CURVE ON VENEZUELA DEMARCHE

REF: STATE 168747

Classified By: Political Officer Maren Smith for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) We spoke about Venezuela with Karl Buck, director of the Council Secretariat's Latin America unit, on August 5. The Dutch Presidency's August 3 declaration on the referendum -- in which the EU encouraged active participation by all voters and "expresses its support for international missions that will deploy observers to the forthcoming referendum, in particular the role of the Carter Center and the OAS" -- had already addressed most of our points. Buck reiterated that the EU was extremely disappointed at not being able to send an observer team, but the conditions imposed on observers were unacceptable to the EU. He added that he had just received a readout of the most recent meeting between EU heads of mission and the OAS, which was aware that, in agreeing to be present, it had accepted something that was not in accordance with its usual standards -- but that it intended to do the best it could. Buck commented that the OAS and other observers faced a lose/lose situation in which they risked "being abused" while they were there, but that their absence would risk making the situation even worse.

¶2. (U) USEU PA will be monitoring the Brussels-based media for coverage of this issue in the run-up to the referendum and will be prepared to offer U.S. views as appropriate. PA has posted on the Mission's Internet site an article about EU Presidency's Venezuela statement.